

How Life Story Interviews Clarify Philanthropic Vision

When donors decide to work with the **California Community Foundation (CCF)**, an integral part of our process is conducting a life story interview, so CCF can learn who the donors are at their very core and ensure the work we do together reflects their values.

Q&A below provides details on what the life story interview process entails and how it helps our donors get clear on their vision for giving.

What is a life story interview?

It is our opportunity to get to know CCF's donors on a personal level. We conduct these interviews as part of our donor discovery process to learn how we can be of better service and to help them make a meaningful impact with their giving. The conversation helps create mission statements that truly reflect who our donors are.

Why does CCF do life story interviews with their donors?

We want to create something that's connected to their overall purpose and help donors craft their mission statement. We use a series of questions to uncover their values, hopes and dreams for the future, which helps to guide everything that comes next in drafting their legacy.

A significant part of the interview is drawing out details that help us discern what areas to target for their donations. We often see donors that have a long list of charities that they want to support, and we try to help them narrow it down to areas that support their values.



At CCF, we know ordinary people can do extraordinary things.

For example, if youth development is something they're passionate about, we try to glean from their life story what aspect of youth development would have the most meaning by tying it to a story connected to their childhood or their family.

What makes the life story interview process unique?

We focus on directly connecting what they want to do in the community with personal aspects of their life, so it's meaningful. The life story interview is an opportunity for our donors to state to themselves, their family and the world what they care about most.

These interviews don't necessarily happen all at once; they can happen over the course of years, where people share little tidbits of their story with us. People think that the life story interview is one moment that happens when a donor decides to partner with us, and we have a formal sit down, but that first interview is simply the beginning of the process.

We do find that, over time, people share personal stories about their childhood or moments that have helped shape their identity. Donors often talk about their spouse, their education, their hopes and dreams for their children and the values that they want to impart to them.

What do interviews look like for donors?

During life story interviews, we give the donors a safe space to share by simply listening.. We take a donor-centered approach, so they can just relax and see where the conversation takes us. Letting the conversation flow naturally is often where the magic happens.

Some donors want all the questions in advance, and we're happy to prepare them in a way that will put them at ease during their interview.

What happens to the interview content?

We share a summary of the interview with donors and use the content to inform their giving strategies and to craft their mission statement. Knowing who our donors are and

what shapes their decision and drive to give means we can help them meet their goals and make a difference in the communities they support.

At CCF, we know ordinary people can do extraordinary things. If you're ready to start making a lasting impact on your community, we are here to help.

Please feel free to contact your Relationship Manager or the Donor Relations Team at donorrelations@calfund.org if you have any questions.

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